

Paul's Astounding Address to Agrippa

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Introduction:

- A. It has been some time since we had a sermon from Luke's book of outlines.
 - 1. There are three lessons remaining, and I intend to finish them this year
 - 2. Paul's Astounding Address to Agrippa - Acts 26:2-29
 - 3. Paul's Restorative Rebuke - Acts 27:21-26
 - 4. Paul's Discourse to the Dull - Acts 28:17-29
- B. What is unique about this sermon?
 - 1. How to preach to the powerful
 - 2. How to answer feedback from an unfriendly audience
 - 3. How to preach to someone who can make or ruin your future
- C. When we finish these lessons, Luke will have shown us how to teach the gospel to any audience under any circumstances

I. THE AUDIENCE

- A. King Agrippa II and Bernice visit Festus - Acts 25:13
 - 1. Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I, who beheaded James - Acts 12:1-23
 - a. 7th and last king of the line of Herod the Great
 - 2. Bernice, sister to Drusilla and Agrippa II, sister in law to Felix
 - a. She was first married to Marcus Alexander, then married her uncle Herod, king of Chalis until he died, then married Polemon, king of Pontus and Cilicia; she soon left him, and began an incestuous relationship with Agrippa II, and later became mistress to Titus, Caesar of Rome
 - 3. Porcius Festus, Roman governor who succeeded Antonio Felix and all of the problems he left behind
 - a. Festus was less refined and more arrogant than Felix
 - 4. Others: chiliarchs - the commanders of a thousand men; the civil officers who controlled commerce and held local office
- B. The setting: Festus describes Paul's case to Agrippa - Acts 25:14-21
 - 1. Paul was left a prisoner by Felix
 - 2. Jews from Jerusalem wanted a judgment against Paul
 - 3. Roman law required that Paul face his accusers
 - 4. In the trial, it became apparent that the questions involved Judaism and whether Jesus was alive
 - 5. Paul appealed to Caesar rather than be judged in Jerusalem
 - 6. Agrippa wanted to hear Paul; Festus consents - Acts 25:21-27

II. THE SERMON

- A. Acts 26:1-23
 - 1. Paul's introductory remarks, courtesy to Agrippa - Acts 26:1-3
 - 2. Paul reviews his early life to set a context - Acts 26:4-11
 - a. His youth in Jerusalem, which all knew
 - b. His religious convictions as a Pharisee; they could attest
 - c. His hope in the resurrection, a promise all Jews should hope

- d. His persecution against the name of Jesus and His disciples
 - e. Paul is not boasting disingenuously or capitulating
 - 3. Paul recounts events on the road to Damascus - Acts 26:12-18
 - a. The commission given to Paul
 - b. To turn Gentiles from darkness to light
 - 4. Paul's conclusion and application - Acts 26:19-23
 - a. He was not disobedient to the vision
 - b. For this, Jews seized him in the temple and sought to kill him
 - c. Yet with God's help he simply testifies what Moses and the prophets said would happen
- B. Reaction to Paul's defense - Acts 26:24-29
 - 1. Festus believes Paul to be mad
 - a. Paul claims to speak words of truth and reason, of things Agrippa knows well
 - 2. Paul challenges Agrippa to believe the prophets and become a Christian
 - 3. Agrippa's response - Acts 26:30-32
 - a. The king, governor, Bernice, and others go aside to discuss Paul's fate
 - b. They all conclude Paul has done nothing worthy of death
 - c. Agrippa tells Festus that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar
 - d. Do you realize that this Agrippa's confession that he believed Paul?

III. THE POINT

- A. There are many who are "almost Christians"
 - 1. Agrippa said, "Almost..." serious/sarcastic?
- B. Why was Agrippa moved to respond this way?
 - 1. v. 25: Paul's respect, courtesy, character
 - a. Too many Christians working with prospects evince an air of superiority; sinners deserve your respect and courtesy
 - b. God loved him enough to send Jesus to die for him; God loves him enough to be patient and send a teacher to him
 - c. Either stop thinking you are better than sinners, or go join the Pharisees
 - d. I am weary to the bone of brethren constantly ripping and tearing on liberals, denominationalists, Jews, and homosexuals, especially when there is so much that needs to be addressed in their own little corner of the world
 - 2. v. 26: The gospel was not "done in a corner"
 - a. Too many people knew of these events to deny them.
 - b. In fact, no one in the first century denied them
 - 3. v. 27: Agrippa knew the OT scriptures.
 - a. He understood what Paul's accusers refused to admit; that Paul's application of them to Jesus was correct

4. v. 27: Paul's love and zeal for souls
 - a. Obviously Agrippa sensed that.
 - b. Love for souls and zeal for God cannot be faked long term
 - c. Even if one disagrees with the man and rejects the message, he will honor the spirit and motives of the messenger

C. The "almost Christian" is not yet saved

1. One might go quite far toward salvation and still not be saved
 - a. The mind might feel the truth of the gospel message.
 - b. The conscience might be stirred with fear.
 - c. The will might be inclined to yield.
2. But he is not saved; Christ's words: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom"
3. He is not saved until he bodily, from the heart, obeys the gospel
4. Rom. 6:17-18